

## 2005 NOVA LARGEMOUTH BASS Lakes Report

District fisheries biologists sampled major reservoirs in northern Virginia in spring 2001-2005. The samples were conducted during daytime with boat electrofishing gear targeting largemouth bass and were conducted in a manner that allows several comparisons to be made concerning these fish populations. Since many anglers seek largemouth bass, and fish considered over 15 inches are considered “preferred” nationwide; the following summary contains information about bass over 15” (preferred size).

The term “RSD-P” (below) stands for “relative stock density of preferred fish” – which is the proportion of bass in a population over eight inches (stock size or “recruits”) that are also at least 15”. Thus, this index describes the size structure of the population . . . the higher the number – the larger the percentage of the population is composed of big fish. The index “CPE-P” stands for “catch per effort of preferred fish.” This is a measure of how many bass over 15” are collected by biologists during a set unit of effort (in this case, 1-hour of electrofishing). Thus, the higher the number is, the more abundant big bass were during the sample.

Several factors can bias the data (e.g., weather conditions, fish behavior), but samples were conducted with efforts to minimize these biases. The following is a summary of these data with lakes ranked by CPE-P:

Reservoir	Rank	Year	Size (AC)	County	CPE-P	RSD-P
Burke	1	2003	218	Fairfax	42	51
Mtn. Run	2	2005	75	Culpeper	37	21
Occoquan	3	2002	2100	Fairfax	35	56
Motts	4	2004	160	Spotsy.	32	33
Orange	5	2005	124	Orange	31	30
Pelham	6	2005	255	Culpeper	28	41
Anna	7	2005	9600	Spotsy. et al.	26	40
Brittle	8	2003	77	Fauquier	20	25
Abel	9	2005	185	Stafford	20	24
Curtis	10	2005	91	Stafford	17	18
Lunga	11	2005	477	Stafford	11	13
Ni	12	2002	411	Spotsy.	11	26
Beaverdam	13	2002	350	Loudoun	8	45
Germantown	14	2002	109	Fauquier	8	6
Breckinridge	15	2001	47	Stafford	7	5
Smith	16	2004	250	Stafford	2	6

All of these lakes are considered “small impoundments” except Lakes Anna and Occoquan; and Lake Anna is, by far, the largest. Therefore, it is not entirely appropriate to compare them all “head-to-head”, as catch rates at large reservoirs are usually lower than in small impoundments (which makes Occoquan’s second place even more impressive).

John Odenkirk, fisheries biologist, noted that the best district lakes (for big bass per hour) were consistent producers year-after-year. **Burke Lake**, a public fishing lake owned and intensively managed by the Department in DC’s backyard, continues to have a phenomenal bass population. **Lake Orange** (with a recently enacted 16-22” slot length limit) has consistently produced numerous very large fish in recent samples. Especially noteworthy at Orange was the number of memorable (20” and over) size category bass. At 12 per hour, no other reservoir came close for “citation size” fish. **Mountain Run Reservoir**, the District’s best “sleeper lake” jumped from 14<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> place – seemingly fully recovered from a fish kill several years ago. For more information, contact Fisheries Division in Fredericksburg (540-899-4169).

Note: We continue to lose lakes to municipal “closures” for a variety of reasons. Public access has been eliminated at Lake Manassas and Goose Creek Reservoir.